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ABSTRACT

This paper posits the thesis that socialization into the profession of psychology is a process of acculturation. Students enter training with their own value traditions but are required to learn new ones when they become psychologists. The assumptions of the framework are that this "professional acculturation" (a) takes place over time, (b) includes various stressors, obstacles, and challenges that (c) can lead to several different outcomes. The authors believe that the profession can and should do a better job of socializing students into the cultural values and ethical standards of the discipline and propose that this process can be better understood by thinking of ethics education by applying Berry's model of acculturation strategies. Doing so may improve ethical behavior in students and be more responsive to an increasingly complex and diverse world. (GCP)

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Training Ethical Psychologists: An Acculturation Model

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Our thesis is that socialization into the profession of psychology is a process of acculturation. Students enter training with their own value traditions but are required to learn new ones when they become psychologists. The assumptions of our framework are that this "professional acculturation" (a) takes place over time, (b) includes various stressors, obstacles, and challenges that (c) can lead to several different outcomes. We believe that the profession can and should do a better job of socializing our students into the cultural values and ethical standards of our discipline and propose that this process can better understood by thinking of ethics education by applying Berry's model of acculturation strategies. Doing so may improve ethical behavior in our students and be more responsive to an increasingly complex and diverse world.

The profession presumes that it takes at least 5 years for bright students to be adequately trained, but only in the area of ethics do we assume that we can socialize students either informally and/or with one ethics course, perhaps bolstered by a workshop or two. To compound the problem, ethics is often taught as the study of right and wrong, [one might get the impression that ethics is more often the study of wrong!] It is our position that ethics is much more than what is found in the APA ethics code and the rules of state regulatory bodies. These codes represent the ethical "floor" or the minimal standards to which psychologists should adhere but do not provide an ethical "ceiling," or information about our aspirations and ethical excellence. We contend that ethical behavior cannot be taught in one course or simply by modeling ethical behavior (Handelsman, 1986; Branstetter & Handelsman, 2000). Rather, we argue below that the development of an identity as an ethical psychologist is a far more complex matter that is deserving of our attention.

Acculturation

In the literature, *psychological acculturation* (Graves, 1967) is defined as "a set of internal psychological outcomes including a clear sense of personal and cultural identity, good mental health, and the achievement of personal satisfaction in the new cultural context" (Berry & Sam, 1997, p. 299). We suggest that "professional acculturation" can be defined by substituting the word "professional" for the word "cultural" in the above definition. Our thesis is that the problems outlined above could be addressed more effectively if we think of professional development as a process of acculturation. We believe that the appreciation and implementation of the ethical values, structures, and ideals of psychology constitute a different culture. Thus, the process of adapting to psychology shares elements of the adaptations necessary when people move from one culture to another.

Berry's Model of Acculturation

Many models of acculturation view the process as a uni-dimensional variable; people are either more or less acculturated to their new, adopted culture. Berry (Berry, 1980; Berry & Sam, 1997) conceived of acculturation as a process of adaptation that includes two variables and leads to four possible styles of acculturation or types of adaptation.

The first variable, which Berry called "cultural maintenance," refers to identification with the culture of origin: Here one asks, "Is it considered to be of value to maintain cultural identity and characteristics?" (Berry & Sam, 1997, p. 296). When people come to a new culture and need to adapt, they are either relatively high or low in their desire to retain their original cultural values and traditions.

The second variable is called "contact and participation" and refers to identification with the adopted culture. They ask, "Is it considered to be of value to maintain relationships with the

dominant society?" (Berry & Sam, 1997, p. 296). According to Berry, being high or low in identification with the culture of origin and the new culture leads to four strategies or modes of acculturation. "

"Integration" describes those high in identification with both cultures. People who adopt an integration strategy keep and bring with them important aspects of their heritage, but they also adopt what their new culture has to offer. According to Berry, integration is the best acculturation strategy. Applied to professional acculturation, people in the "integration" mode fully adopt the APA code and its values while understanding and not rejecting their own value tradition.

Berry called the strategy of accepting the new culture but being low in identification with one's culture of origin "assimilation." In this strategy, the new majority culture is adopted and the values and traditions from the culture of origin are discarded. We believe "assimilation" may be dangerous for student psychologists. Students may feel so strongly motivated to develop a professional identity that they divorce themselves from the values that had previously guided their personal lives. A common misconception that may be implicit in the assimilation strategy is that, "the APA Code of Ethics contains all that I need to know to practice (teach, research) ethically." In this mode students adopt the APA code, but with little sense of personal morality that would underlie it.

Separation

The separation mode of acculturation represents high identification with one's culture of origin and value traditions but low identification with the new culture. Applied to psychology training, students would have a well-developed ethical sense from their own upbringing, or from other professions they've been exposed to, but they would not identify with the values of

professional psychology. Although well-meaning, they may not be in touch with, or may not agree with, the shared values of the profession. An implicit misconception may be the belief that, "The way in which I express my personal morality always translates into virtuous professional behavior." Problems are easy to foresee for those who actively reject large portions of our professional and ethical culture. Although they may have a very strong personal code of ethics and be very well-intentioned, they may also be unaware of the dangers involved in acting on a set of principles or virtues that are inconsistent with the professional context.

Marginalization

The most problematic acculturation strategy is that of low identification with both cultures. Berry referred to this mode as Marginalization. Sometimes this may be a temporary strategy, such as when people move to a new culture and give up their culture of origin before they attempt to adopt the majority culture. However, marginalization may also constitute an enduring state of alienation.

In terms of ethics, marginal psychologists do not have a well developed personal moral sense, and they do not, or do not yet, have an internalized sense of professional ethical issues. We hypothesize that such persons are at greatest risk for ethical infractions, especially more serious ones. The extreme of this dimension is represented by psychopaths, although such persons represent a very small percentage of psychologists, even among those who commit ethical infractions. A general misconception implicit among these psychologists may be the belief that all ethics codes and standards are equally arbitrary and oppressive, and they follow them only because they fear reprisal if they did otherwise.

Implications of an Acculturation Model

There is good reason to believe that becoming an ethical professional is a developmental process. There are many sources of tension and stress during the acculturation process. The acculturation literature has identified several factors that may influence acculturation strategies and exacerbate the stress of the process. Among these are: difficulties people had in their culture of origin, whether they were personal, familial, economic or political (Berry & Sam, 1997); gender; "cultural distance" (Berry & Sam, 1997, p. 307) or the degree of difference between the two cultures; and poor training and/or few poor role models in the new culture. Any single one or combination of these stressors may leave students vulnerable to marginalization, assimilation, or separation.

We propose a framework for training that conceptualizes ethics education as a process that has many commonalities with Berry's notion of acculturation and adaptation. This framework may allow us better to investigate and understand the transition from "person" to "psychological professional," to reduce the ethical infractions of current and future colleagues, and to elevate the functioning of the profession.

Questions For Future Research

The acculturation literature gives us some ideas about how to study the professional acculturation process. Specifically in regard to training, there are several questions worthy of research: How do we socialize students now? How well do we do it and how, if at all, is it measured? Where will students get into trouble in the acculturation process, and what factors might mediate and moderate acculturation stress? We would predict that an emphasis on staying out of trouble, avoiding ethics complaints and malpractice suits, would create stress among trainees and new professionals. Further, we would hypothesize that a more explicit recognition

of our most cherished values and traditions would help students mediate stress and achieve more. Does Berry's model actually apply? Will the four categories correctly categorize student functioning? If so, will the model predict how students perform during training and later in practice? We believe it would be useful to develop a measure of professional and ethical acculturation. Such a measure might be used to predict not only stress during graduate training, but perhaps more long-term difficulties as new psychologists begin their careers.

Conclusion

The use of an acculturation model may help guide the socialization of students, especially in the acquisition of their ethical identity. Indeed, we would like to see a shift from having students feel like involuntary refugees ("You're in this country now, and this is the way we do things.") to having students feel like voluntary immigrants ("Welcome to our country!") who come because the new culture offers them something to enrich who they are. We see the goal of ethics training as the enrichment rather than replacement of their ethical identities and the integration rather than alienation of new members into our culture.

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